

Case study: Eeyore

Apply your mental training skills to a tough client.

Did you ever read *Winnie the Pooh* as a kid? Remember that character, Eeyore the donkey? Boy was he gloomy.

In the original stories by A.A. Milne (before the slightly cheerier Disney movie version), Eeyore was a major downer, sharing a variety of soul-shrivelling opinions such as: “*We can’t all [do things], and some of us don’t. That’s all there is to it.*”

If there was a silver lining, Eeyore was sure to find the dark cloud around it.

Today we meet Eeyore in the form of a client.

Meet your client, Lynnette.

Being around Lynnette is sort of like having a bucket of molasses poured over your head. She’s sweet. But she can really weigh you down.

Lynnette is full of “can’t-do” energy. In her world, everything is an obstacle. Opportunities for failure abound. She’s a walking catalogue of her faults and weaknesses.

For example, you’ve just assigned Lynnette a new habit: Build a sleep ritual that’ll help you get at least 7 hours of sleep per night.

You know she needs it. She’s pre-diabetic and if she doesn’t get her blood sugar and insulin under control, she’s in big trouble. You know that sleep is a powerful regulator of glucose homeostasis in the body, and that sleep deprivation creates major metabolic disruption that can push people into premature Type 2 diabetes.

So, in your mind, improving Lynnette's sleep is a crucial habit that will also make her feel better about life in general.

Her response?

"I'm not going to do well with this habit at all. I have so little control over this. Just when I'm trying to get everything together so I can get back on track with compliance, I see that I won't be able to be compliant at all with this one. I have not been able to sleep well in the past few years, and particularly these past months it's more erratic due to hot flashes and also husband's schedule. If I get five hours a night, and six on a weekend, it's pretty good. And that is not normal for my body."

Sigh.

Lynnette, sweetheart that she is, senses your frustration. She tries to make you feel better.

"I'm so sorry! I'm not upset with you! I just feel like I'll never be where I want to be."

Now she's on a roll. She's cracked open the Pandora's Box of Lynnette the Loser.

"I just don't feel like I can control my food intake like I need to. I can string together a few good days and then I just don't know what happens. I don't binge... well, not really... but I just can't seem to stop before being full. And having a horrible time sitting with my hunger and waiting. All I think about is trying to wait to eat and then it totally distracts me from doing my job and then I simply give in."

And speaking of my job, it's so frustrating... We've been short staffed for a year and a half and my boss doesn't see filling the position as a priority."

I feel like I can barely keep my head above water most days. I am constantly picking up the house, doing dishes... and then the dog got sick... My whole life feels like one big disorganized, chaotic mess...and it's all on me."

I know I'm holding myself back. I can't seem to get my shit in gear to plan meals, prep them, etc. lately. I feel like a mental case and each day wonder if something is going to push me to a breakdown. Every day begins well... I eat well, have a plan... and it just falls apart."

I mean, I was cleaning out the house yesterday and I came across an assessment sheet from my old gym, two years ago. Since then I've not only not gone to the gym, I've put on 40

pounds! And at that time I was a member of a gym, to lose some weight.

I'm so embarrassed.

Everyone I know must have seen me putting on that weight, acting oblivious, pretending like no one could see me. And it's my fault. I just kept buying leggings instead of jeans. I'm mortified. And ashamed, and frustrated. I wouldn't have to lose 80 lbs if I had have just got it together, two years ago!

Oh, what's the use. It's pointless."

You gather your thoughts while Lynnette rummages in her purse for a Kleenex to blow her nose and dry her tears.

This woman is in serious need of positive self-talk.

What do you do, coach?

Assignment instructions

Imagine and then write the story of your next steps with Lynnette as “coaching field notes”.

Imagine that you'll then use these field notes to explain your coaching session and strategies to your supervisor — so be sure to be detailed, and help your supervisor understand the situation and your actions.

In your field notes, include the following.

- 1 Using the list of capacities in the Wheel of Excellence from Tuesday's lesson, assess Lynnette's mental skills needs. What mental skills would benefit her? What does she currently lack?
- 2 What might be your action plan and strategy as a coach? What are Lynnette's next action steps as a client?
- 3 Why are you choosing this action plan/strategy? Why these particular next action steps?

- 4 How will you ensure that Lynnette is ready, willing, and able to follow through with this action plan and action steps? (After all, she's pretty discouraged.)
- 5 Do you need to have a crucial conversation with Lynnette? If so, describe it. If not, why not?

This case study should be about 1 to 1.5 pages long. As always, get creative and have fun with it! If you want to act this out and film it, then submit your assignment as a video, that's cool.

Assignment instructions summary

- 1 Review the case study scenario above.
- 2 Imagine and then write the story of your next steps with Lynnette as "coaching field notes".
- 3 As part of these field notes, describe your action plan, why you chose it, and how you intend to help Lynnette with her mental skills development. Describe your session and strategy with Lynnette in as much detail as possible.
- 4 This case study should be about 1 to 1.5 pages long.

What to do today

- 1 **Review the instructions for today's case study.**
Make sure you are clear on what we are asking you to do. If you have questions, please ask on the Facebook group.
- 2 **Review this week's lessons, as well as material on communication and motivational interviewing.**
This will help you prepare the ground and your client's mindset. Also stay tuned for next week's lessons, which will give you more tips and strategies.

3 **Submit your case study writeup within the next two weeks.**

You'll see the "Case study submission" card on your Today page.

You'll have two weeks from now to complete your assignment and submit this card.

When you're ready, paste your case study answer into the "Case study submission" and click "Submit".

Remember: once the next "Case study assigned" card pops up 2 Thursdays from now, your submission window expires, and *you won't be able to submit this one.*

So plan your schedule accordingly, give yourself lots of time to work on your assignment, and don't wait until the last minute.

Until tomorrow,

The PN Coaching Team